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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-fifth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(Item 3 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

1. At its 7th meeting, on 4 June 2015, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (E/AC.51/2015/7).

2. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS introduced the report and, together with a representative of ESCAP, responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the report and for the productive dialogue between ESCAP and member States. Some delegations expressed agreement with the recommendations outlined in the report and the increase in accountability, the focus on transportation, trade and investment and the new energy portal. Satisfaction was also expressed regarding the work of the subregional offices (notably for the Pacific region, East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia, and South and South-West Asia).

4. Delegations questioned the heavy focus of the report on the areas of research and analysis, indicating that that should not undermine the importance of other categories of work of ESCAP, in particular technical assistance and capacity-

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building activities, which were crucial for implementation of the main mandate of ESCAP and to promote regional cooperation and action for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development. Delegations were of the view that, although the publication of analytical work (such as guidance or rules) was essential, additional focus should be given to capacity development and providing support services to stakeholders.

5. In relation to the methodology of the evaluation, clarification was sought regarding paragraph 15 (d), notably which Governments, non-governmental organizations and member States had been interviewed or formed part of the focus groups. Furthermore, delegations raised specific methodological questions regarding the composition of the group of 42 stakeholders who had been interviewed or taken part in the focus groups. Delegations acknowledged the challenges faced in the collection of data and evidence, such as low response rates to the stakeholder survey, and sought to know the reasons therefor.

6. Concerning section B and paragraphs 26 and 27 of the report, on the lack of a strong corporate framework to support joint work planning and coordination being insufficient to achieve the strategic goal of ESCAP to promote a multidisciplinary perspective, one delegation sought clarification as to the challenges faced and action being taken by ESCAP to resolve the issue and whether other regional commissions were also facing the same problem. Delegations recalled that member States approved the programme of work of ESCAP. In that regard, one recalled previous discussions on comprehensive reform and restructuring of human resources in ESCAP units and divisions. Delegations sought clarification on dialogue with States members of ESCAP, on ensuring strong corporate strategic work planning and on successful joint planning across ESCAP entities. A question was raised regarding the ability of ESCAP to assess its overall effectiveness and the implementation of its programme of work, for example whether the desired outcomes were being achieved.

7. Clarification was sought regarding the comments made in paragraph 59 of the report, in which it was indicated that ESCAP needed to clarify its current role, to improve its methods to assess effectiveness and to strategically identify the areas in which it could most effectively add value.

8. Delegations raised questions regarding coordination mechanisms, more particularly the measures implemented to promote coordination with other regional entities, as well as entities from other regions, and to avoid any overlap. In addition, one delegation requested clarification on specific projects pertaining to road and train connectivity within the region in the light of the reference in paragraph 21 of the report to the Turkey-Islamic Republic of Iran-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar road corridor and the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka container train corridor.

9. One delegation sought clarification of the role of ESCAP in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and how its effectiveness would be assessed.

10. Delegations expressed concern at the high percentage of extrabudgetary funding and the possible impact of that situation on the work of ESCAP. Clarification was sought as to how ESCAP compared with other regional commissions in that regard.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 65 to 68 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of ESCAP, while recognizing that certain progress had already been made in addressing those recommendations.

12. The Committee recalled that ESCAP worked to overcome some of the region's greatest challenges by providing results-oriented projects, technical assistance and capacity-building to member States. In that context, the Committee emphasized that the focus of the report on research and analysis should not undermine the importance of other categories of work of ESCAP, in particular technical assistance and capacity-building activities, which were crucial for the implementation of the main mandate of ESCAP to promote regional cooperation and action for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development.

13. The Committee noted the crucial importance of efficient joint planning and coordination to achieve the strategic goal of ESCAP to promote a multidisciplinary perspective and stressed the need for a strong ESCAP corporate framework to support joint work planning in the implementation of research and analysis and other ESCAP work. In that regard, it recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to make further efforts to address those issues appropriately, taking into account the experiences of other regional commissions.